



Effective Health Care

Behavioral Health Interventions for Depression, Anxiety, and Agitation in persons with Dementia

Nomination Summary Document

Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- The topic, *Behavioral Health Interventions for Depression, Anxiety, and Agitation in persons with Dementia*, will go forward for refinement as a systematic review. The scope of this topic, including populations, interventions, comparators, and outcomes, will be further developed in the refinement phase.
- When key questions have been drafted, they will be posted on the AHRQ Web site and open for public comment. To sign up for notification when this and other Effective Health Care (EHC) Program topics are posted for public comment, please go to <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/join-the-email-list1/>.

Topic Description

Nominator(s): Organization

Nomination Summary: The nominator asserts that providers may be uncertain how to best utilize behavioral interventions for psychiatric changes associated with dementia such as depression, anxiety, and agitation. The nominator asserts that a product on the nominated topic could support clinical guidelines and provide a better understanding of the relative value of psychosocial interventions in traditional and non-traditional behavioral health settings (e.g., home care, assisted living).

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Population(s): Individuals with dementia

Intervention(s): Behavioral interventions (non-pharmacological, psychosocial interventions) including, but not limited to: psychotherapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, music therapy, aroma therapy, reminiscence therapy, and light therapy

Comparator(s): Those listed above (i.e., compared to each other) and usual care

Outcome(s): Improvement in neuropsychiatric symptoms commonly associated with dementia (e.g., depression, anxiety, and agitation)

Key Questions from Nominator: In patients with dementia, what is the comparative effectiveness of psychological treatments (i.e., non-pharmacological; e.g., cognitive or behavioral therapy for individuals with dementia; environmental and behavioral interventions to address behavioral change in individuals with dementia; psychotherapy/psychoeducation for family caregivers) to treat depression, anxiety, and agitation?

Considerations

- The topic meets all EHC Program selection criteria. (For more information, see <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/>.)
- Dementia is an umbrella term for cognitive disorders that are characterized by memory impairment, as well as difficulty in the areas of language, motor activity, and object recognition. Individuals with dementia may also struggle with the ability to plan, organize, and abstract. Depression, agitation, anxiety, aggression, and irritability commonly occur in persons with dementia.
- Although pharmacological agents are often used in the treatment of depression and anxiety, they may not produce clinically significant outcomes individuals with dementia. In addition, the harms associated with pharmacological treatments for depression and anxiety may outweigh the clinical benefits for patients with dementia. Psychosocial interventions such as sensory-stimulation, music therapy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy may be more efficacious than pharmacological treatments. However, there is only limited clinical guidance regarding their use.
- Based on a search of the literature, there is evidence specific to non-pharmacological interventions for the treatment of depression, anxiety, and agitation in individuals with dementia to warrant a systematic review by AHRQ that can be used to inform clinical decision making by providers and caregivers.